

2019

Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Financing Strategically



CHILD CARE
State Capacity Building Center

Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Financing Strategically

Financing an early childhood system is an essential part of systems building. Providing a state and its partners with approaches for a sound and solvent finance strategy is critical. This guide provides an overview of key concepts linking state financing options and systems building. The focus is on defining key state-based financing strategies, providing an overview of practical financial management practices, and reviewing financing forecasting tools.

Finance refers to receiving and allocating funds and conducting analysis designed to build capacity and sustain a system. It is important to consider funding an early childhood education system in new and creative ways. Financing strategically is an approach for states to better use existing and new or ongoing resources, maximizing public revenue and allocating that revenue in new ways. It may mean generating new state revenue, creating or enhancing public-private partnerships, and expanding private sector contributions to the system. Financial management and forecasting are essential practices that help states create and sustain a system. Financing strategically builds a more collaborative system and stronger partnerships.

In today's world, a well-planned financial effort is necessary to support a vision, standards, and outcomes in an early childhood system. There is pressure to show improved outcomes for young children and ensure that they are ready to succeed in school. There is often a lack of coordination of funding for this age group and for the system that is needed to support positive outcomes. Public funds are limited by target populations and narrowly defined specialized activities required by the funding source. Private and philanthropic initiatives designed to improve quality and accessibility of services are also narrowly targeted, short-term, and often uncoordinated. The result is often a lack of funding for services and supports, as well as disjointed funding, and thus a fragmented early childhood system.

Financing an early childhood system is complex. Each entity within the system has unique funding sources and mandates, which often specify services or outcomes to be provided. Identifying, coordinating, managing, and funding sources is crucial to meeting expected outcomes.

Technical Assistance in Systems Building for State Leaders

Technical assistance to support systems building, including strategic planning, is available through the State Capacity Building Center and may be available through other federal technical assistance centers. Please check with your State Systems Specialist for more information.

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Revenue Generation Strategies

There are many ways to generate revenue to support an early childhood system. This section describes such options as state general revenue, taxing, tax credits, and lotteries. This section of the guide offers descriptions of ways to maximize revenue and shares state examples.

State General Revenue

According to the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, the sources of state general revenue are income, sales, and other taxes; charges and fees; and transfers from the federal government. In 2016, state governments collected more than \$1.9 trillion in general revenue. General revenue from income, sales, and other taxes totaled \$923 billion—nearly half of all general revenue. About one-third came from intergovernmental transfers.¹

States often use general revenue funds to match federal funding, as is required for the Child Care and Development Fund, or as a required funding base to draw down federal funds. General revenue may also be used to go beyond required matching or maintenance-of-effort requirements in early childhood. States frequently use general revenue for state-only programs as well, such as state-sponsored preschools.

State general revenue can be allocated to fund any part of the early childhood system. These allocations may be found as separate line items within organizations, such as education, human services, or consolidated early childhood agencies, and they may also be embedded within formulas, such as state education aid formulas.²

There are many examples of states using general revenue to support early childhood, including the following:

- [North Carolina's Smart Start initiative](#) and Rhode Island's Starting Right Initiative are funded partly through general revenue funds.
- Several states use general revenue to support state prekindergarten programs, including [Maine](#), [Oklahoma](#), Texas, and [Wisconsin](#).³

The [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) created a table to show the major sources of federal and state early childhood education funding, adapted below:⁴

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Table 1. Major Sources of Federal and State Early Childhood Education Funding in FY 2016

Program	Population Targeted	Financing Mechanism	Funding (\$ billions)	
			Federal	State and Local
Subsidized Care				
Early Head Start and Head Start	Families with income < FPL, ages 0–5 years	Direct to providers	\$9.168	–
Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)	Qualifying low-income families, ages 0–12 years	To providers via vouchers or contracts	\$3.427	\$1.307
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) transfer to CCDF	Qualifying low-income families, ages 0–12 years	To providers via vouchers or contracts	\$0.792	–
TANF direct child care	Qualifying TANF recipients, ages 0–12 years	To providers via vouchers or contracts	\$0.782	\$2.776
State-funded prekindergarten	Targeted or universal, ages 3–5 years	To providers via vouchers, scholarships, contracts, grants, or school-funding formulae	–	\$7.391
Locally-funded prekindergarten	Same as state-funded	Same as state-funded	–	Not available
Tax-Based Subsidies				
Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit	Working families with tax liability, ages 0–12 years (and adults)	Personal income tax credit (refundable in some states)	\$4.590	Not available for equivalent state programs
Dependent Care Assistance Program	Working families with tax liability, ages 0–12 years (and adults)	Employer-administered account to pay for eligible expenses with pre-tax dollars	\$1.000	–
Employer-provided child care credit	Working families with qualifying employer, ages 0–12 years	Employer tax credit	\$0.010	Not available for equivalent state programs
Total			\$17.5–\$19.8	\$11.5+

Adapted from National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). Transforming the financing of early care and education, p. 62. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Taxes

A state may use several types of taxes to generate revenue. A common type of tax is a sales tax, which is a [consumption tax](#) imposed by the government on the sale of goods and services. Several states have dedicated a portion of sales tax income to fund initiatives or programs for early care and education systems:

- [South Carolina](#) established preschool for at-risk 4-year-old children as part of an education-improvement bill and funded it with a one-cent increase in sales tax.⁵
- [Arkansas's](#) preschool program is also part of an education reform package supported by an Education Trust Fund, which is funded by a dedicated sales tax.⁶

Another type of tax is the so-called [sin tax](#), which is a state-sponsored tax on goods that are considered either physically or morally harmful (such as alcohol, tobacco, and gambling). Several states successfully used sin taxes to fund early childhood initiatives.

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- The Arkansas legislature passed a 3-year surtax on beer to enhance funding for early care and education. In fiscal year 2005, the tax was renewed but later removed, although the program continues. However, while it was in effect, it generated \$40 million.⁷
- California's First Five program derives nearly all its funds—more than \$3 billion so far—from a tax on cigarettes earmarked specifically for public early childhood and child health programs.⁸

Tax Credits

Many types of tax credits exist. This section reviews personal income tax credits, business income tax credits, and investment and incentive tax credits.

Personal income tax credits are an amount of money that taxpayers may subtract from the amount of tax they owe the government. The value of a tax credit depends on what the credit is for; certain types of tax credits are granted to individuals or businesses in specific locations, classifications, or industries. The following examples are about personal income tax credits for early childhood:

- Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia have established a state dependent-care tax credit.⁹ For example, New York State and New York City have a refundable dependent-care tax for eligible families. Families will get extra cash back from the state if their New York State and New York City Child and Dependent Care Credits are worth more than the state and city taxes they owe.¹⁰
- Louisiana has a school-readiness child care expense tax credit for taxpayers with a qualified dependent under the age of 6 who attended a child care facility that participates in the quality rating program. The school-readiness child care expense tax credit may be used alongside the regular child care expense credit.¹¹

Business income tax credits are subsidies that reduce a company's taxes by allowing it to deduct all or part of certain expenses from its income tax bill on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Business tax credits span many areas, including investment, work opportunity, welfare-to-work, alcohol fuels, research and experimentation, low-income housing, and enhanced oil recovery.¹² States have used these subsidies for early childhood programs in the following ways:

- Twenty-eight states have established some form of an employer tax credit, which typically allows an employer to claim a corporate tax credit for a percentage of the cost of an employee child care benefit. A business may deduct expenditures for child care programs from its corporate income as reasonable and necessary business expenses before taxes are calculated.¹³
- [Maine](#) has a unique tax credit created to improve the quality of child care. If an individual provider spends \$10,000 in one year on expenses that significantly improve the quality of care, the provider may take a \$1,000 tax credit for the next 10 years and a \$10,000 credit at the end of 10 years.¹⁴

Investment or incentive tax credits are tax deductions for businesses that reflect an amount they reinvest in themselves. Investment tax credits are structured to reward and encourage economic growth. Early childhood examples include the following:

- The Colorado child care contribution tax credit, available against both corporate and personal state income tax, has been in place since 1989. Taxpayers receive a credit worth 25 percent of their contribution, up to \$100,000.¹⁵

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- The Oregon child care investment tax credit was designed as an investment strategy that uses tax credits to generate private sector contributions to child care. Like federal low-income housing tax credits, the Oregon credits are marketed and sold to an investor. Invested funds are then drawn into a single pool that is used to help fund the child care industry. Unlike housing tax credits, which are sold at a price negotiated by an intermediary, taxpayers who purchase Oregon child care credits receive a credit of up to \$1 for every \$1 contributed.¹⁶

Local Taxes

Local fees and special taxes are taxes that are levied in addition to state and federal taxes. This guide focuses primarily on state-level revenue generation strategies, but, in light of growing interest in local leadership for early childhood, it also describes some local efforts that are used to finance early childhood education. These local taxes are frequently property, sales, water, sewer, school, and occasionally income taxes. Funds generated in this way cover some community services, such as local education, and have been used for early childhood:¹⁷

- Several counties in [Florida](#), including Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Martin, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and St. Lucie, adopted a children's special taxing district to create new funding for children's services. This may include paying for improvements in the child care system, professional development opportunities, and other early childhood and child and family supports.¹⁸
- In Oakland, California, a local measure was passed to set aside money to benefit children and youth. Oakland uses a portion of this money to fund several early childhood initiatives, including a mental health and development consultant model. This program includes support for consultation in the classroom and child-centered mental health consultation.¹⁹
- The City of Seattle, Washington, passed a property tax levy called the Families and Education Levy. The program, administered by the city in collaboration with the Seattle School District, supports funding of programs for school-based and community support to assist with a parent-child home program, professional development opportunities for early care and education teachers, closing the achievement gap of vulnerable populations, and other supports for early learning.²⁰
- Texas allows local communities to impose a sales tax that can be used for local initiatives. San Antonio, for example, uses local tax dollars for a prekindergarten program.²¹

Lotteries

Lotteries raise money by selling numbered tickets for prizes that are given to the holders of numbers drawn at random. Lotteries are a popular way to fund education; prekindergarten services are included in some states:

- Thirteen states have lotteries with a stated purpose of funding education. Georgia has consistently used lottery proceeds to fund a universal preschool program, and Florida has funded its preschool program partly with lottery dollars.²²
- In 2003, the [Oklahoma](#) legislature approved a two-part ballot measure to establish an education lottery and enact a constitutional amendment to ensure that all proceeds benefit education from prekindergarten through 12th grade. The Oklahoma State Legislature appropriates 45 percent of funds in the Oklahoma Lottery Education Trust Fund to elementary and secondary education, K–12. Funding can be used to provide compensation for public school teachers, support employees, support early childhood development programs, and the like.²³
- [Tennessee](#) voters have also approved establishing a lottery and the use of its proceeds for prekindergarten to 12th-grade education.²⁴

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Gambling or Related Fees

Gambling is playing a game of chance for money or other stakes. States have designated funds from gambling opportunities for early childhood:

- [Missouri](#) uses a portion of riverboat gambling fees to fund early care and education services. Missouri considers these fees levied on gamblers and not gambling proceeds.²⁵
- Maryland collects gambling fees that go into the Maryland Education Trust Fund. These funds are used to support prekindergarten programs as well as K–12 systems.²⁶

Tobacco Settlement Funds

The Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement was entered in November 1998, originally between the four largest United States tobacco companies and the attorneys general of 46 states. Several states, such as Kentucky and Kansas, use a portion of the state's share of the tobacco settlement to fund early care and education. Kentucky allotted 25 percent of its settlement, or \$56 million over two years, beginning in state fiscal year 2000.²⁷ The state continues to use tobacco settlement funds to support early learning.²⁸

Public-Private Strategies, Including Pay for Success

Private resources and expertise can be leveraged to increase the quality and availability of programs and services provided to children from birth to age five. There are many ways to leverage private resources to support early childhood.

- Hawaii has leveraged private resources with state and federal dollars to fund [Learning to Grow](#). This program provides statewide education outreach to families and license-exempt child care providers to support efforts to enhance children's early learning, healthy development, and high-quality home-based care.²⁹
- [Minnesota](#) raised and invested private funding to learn about and plan how to improve its early education system. The project used \$20 million in private money to set the foundation for an early learning system.³⁰

Pay for success, or social impact bonds, is a relatively new approach to finance that combines funding, program evaluation, and program management. Its goal is to improve social outcomes while more effectively allocating scarce public-sector resources. In one pay-for-success model, the government contracts for a program or initiative to address a societal need. In the start-up mode, philanthropic funders provide the financial resources to pay for the program. In this model, government, service providers, and philanthropic funders agree on targeted outcomes, and independent evaluators monitor program performance.³¹

Funding for a pay-for-success initiative can come from several sources. Should the program achieve the agreed metrics, the government will be able to reimburse the initial funders for their invested capital and reinvest in the program. If the program fails to meet target outcomes, state agencies are not obligated to repay the investors. Under the pay-for-success construct, performance risk is transferred to the private funders. An additional attraction is that these programs often drive fiscal savings along with improved outcomes for the target population.³²

One compelling element of pay-for-success or social impact bonds is the way they blend some parts of results- or performance-based financing and public-private partnerships. New research on pay for success, or social impact bonds, shows promising practices.³³ Some examples of early childhood programs using the pay-for-success model include the following:

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- Utah established a pay-for-success model for early childhood education for children receiving high-quality preschool. Through a partnership led by United Way of Salt Lake in cooperation with Goldman Sachs and others, the Utah High Quality Preschool Program delivers a high-impact, targeted curriculum to increase school readiness and academic performance among three- and four-year-old children in various community and school settings. The partnership makes payments based on reduced special education use.³⁴
- The City of Chicago had a \$16.9 million social impact bond deal to provide early childhood educational services (prekindergarten) to up to 2,620 children for the 2014–2015 school year, with additional proposed expansion for 2015–2019. The intervention funded by the social impact bond works with both children and their parents through the historic half-day Child-Parent Center (CPC) model. Goldman Sachs's Social Impact Fund and Northern Trust are serving as the senior lenders, with the J. B. and M. K. Pritzker Family Foundation in a supporting role. The program works with preschool children and their parents to improve educational outcomes, providing children with a positive preschool experience and parents with tools to assist with the learning experience. Along with the proposed intervention goals (readying children for kindergarten, improving third-grade literacy, and reducing the need for special education services), the program has enabled more children to have access to higher-quality preschool experiences.³⁵

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Maximizing the Impact of Public Funding

Maximizing the impact of public funds is a financing approach that encourages coordinating and integrating existing public-sector funding, the use of shared services, and layering and blending or pooling funds. These strategies can expand a funding base, provide more stable revenues, and provide opportunities to maximize funds for early childhood system building, creating and sustaining an initiative or program.

Coordinating and Integrating Existing Public Sector Funding

Coordinating and integrating existing public-sector funding involves taking separate public funding streams that were created to support a specific program and using these funds in a coordinated or integrated way to support system building in early childhood or support an initiative or program. Coordination and integration of public funds often eliminates or minimizes overlap and gaps in services. Some states have sought to improve coordination by restructuring the agencies that administer early childhood funds for integration of public funding.

- Several states have created a governor’s children’s cabinet or other state-level early childhood agency to ensure coordination and integration of early care and education, including financing issues. In Virginia, the Children’s Cabinet is committed to providing coordination oversight across child- and family-serving systems.³⁶
- Several states—such as Connecticut,³⁷ Georgia, and Massachusetts—have established an entirely new agency to administer all early childhood funds. Others, such as Arkansas and Maryland, have transferred their early childhood programs to one agency. Still others, such as Pennsylvania, have otherwise consolidated their early childhood programs.³⁸
- [North Carolina](#) created a statewide public-private partnership to manage early care and education funds and improve coordination. North Carolina’s partnership for children (Smart Start) supports local entities to advance a high-quality, comprehensive, accountable system of care for early care and education.³⁹

Shared Services

Shared services involves sharing within an organization or group. Specifically, it refers to one part of an organization or group providing a service that had previously been found in more than one part of the organization or group. Thus, the funding and resourcing of the service is shared.

Shared accountability for results is a fundamental tenet of a shared-services approach. All partners need to ensure that the agreed results are delivered based on defined measures. This approach is emerging as a strategy for maximizing the impact of resources invested in early childhood, primarily for those providing direct services to children and their families. This strategy can be seen as supportive of system financing. By providing ways to support a program or provider, it allows funding to be redirected or allocated in different ways.⁴⁰ The following are proven results of shared services in early childhood:⁴¹

- Reduced or shared costs and time through joint purchasing, staff sharing, centralized administration, or some combination.
- Shared program or administrative capacity building through the use of common tools and systems, shared mentoring and supervision, and collaborative improvement processes.
- Reinvestment of cost and time savings into enhanced program quality.

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There are a growing number of emerging and successful shared-services alliances in the early childhood sector. In “intensive” shared-services models, a local or regional network of centers, homes, or both collaborates and shares staff to deliver services more efficiently and with greater attention to quality. When organizations come together to participate in a shared service, they are often identified as an alliance. These alliances may use a range of business models to operate.

- Sound Child Care Solutions (SCCS) in Seattle is a local example of shared services. According to its website, “SCCS is a consortium of seven child care centers that creates stable child care by sharing administrative, accounting, and human resource functions, while simultaneously investing in improved teacher practices by providing ongoing professional development opportunities in alignment with our commitment to undoing institutionalized racism and providing quality care and education to the children we serve.”⁴²
- In Fairfax, Virginia, the [Infant Toddler Family Day Care](#) is a shared-services consortium of providers that receive a wide range of supports and services including marketing, training, monthly billing and collections, professional networking, supports to parents, and a substitute pool.
- [Quality Care for Children](#), in Georgia, is a hub for web-based services that are offered statewide. These shared services include cost savings on food and supplies, templates, and support documents.

Layering or Blending and Braiding Multiple Funding Streams

Layering or blending and braiding multiple funding streams is a process for using multiple funding streams to support a common activity, initiative, or project.

- Blending refers to wrapping funds from two or more funding sources together to fund a specific part of a program or initiative. In blending, costs are not necessarily allocated and tracked by individual funding sources.
- When funds are braided, two or more funding sources are coordinated to support the total cost of a service. Revenues are allocated and expenditures tracked by different categories of funding sources. In braiding, cost-allocation methods are required to ensure that there is no duplicate funding of service costs and that each funding source is charged its fair share across the partners.⁴³

At the state level, blending and braiding are financing strategies that federal, state, and local policymakers and program administrators can use to integrate and align discrete categorical funding streams to broaden the impact and reach of services provided.⁴⁴ Some early childhood examples include the following:

- [Oregon](#) passed legislation (HB 3380) to create a diverse-delivery state prekindergarten program and allow multiple types of providers to seek multiple funding streams. The legislation explicitly addresses the goal of using multiple funding streams.⁴⁵
- New York City reorganized its system of contracted child care through [EarlyLearn NYC](#). This program braided funding from child care, Head Start, and state universal prekindergarten to improve access and continuity for low-income children and their families. EarlyLearn NYC has implemented higher program-quality standards and redistributed contracts across the city to increase the supply of care in targeted high-need neighborhoods.⁴⁶

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- [Colorado](#) blends revenues across departments. A data system exists for state and local leaders in Colorado who want to develop comprehensive programs for children and families. The online data tool includes federal and state funding streams and eligibility criteria and identifies the goal area of service delivery. Users can search the database, export Excel files, and produce reports to support efforts to blend and braid federal, state, and local resources to sustain programs.⁴⁷

Pooling Funds

Pooling funds are funds from many individual investors that are aggregated for the purpose of investment in a program, initiative, or system infrastructure.⁴⁸ Many funding streams that support early childhood are categorical and targeted to specific populations of children or fund only specific services for eligible populations. Coordinating different funding sources—including federal, state, private, and local—can provide programs with greater flexibility, enabling them to reach a broader range of children or provide a wider range of services. Coordination at the state level can take different forms, such as pooling flexible funds to create a blended source of funding or decategorizing funds to remove or realign regulations so that they can be blended to provide comprehensive services. These strategies increase access to vital services to those most in need:

- In [Connecticut](#), the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund supported an Early Childhood Funders affinity group. The group is comprised of a number of funders—large and small—who make grants to support early care and education in Connecticut. This group has pooled and coordinated funding in areas such as facilities and community engagement.⁴⁹
- In [Missouri](#), eight agencies pooled a portion of their funds to sponsor community partnerships throughout the state. These community partnerships are required to work toward achieving core results for children and families; however, the funds do not restrict them to prescribed services.⁵⁰

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Financial Management

Managing financial resources to achieve goals, objectives, and results that maximize the value of an investment is critical for a long-term horizon in creating a system, project, or initiative in early childhood education. Strategic financial management involves a defined sequence of steps and strategies that include setting goals and objectives, identifying and allocating resources, analyzing data and making financial decisions, tracking the budget for variance and identifying the reasons for any variance, and making corrections as needed. State budget offices regularly use these strategies to ensure that outcomes and results are tracked and achieved. These practices may also be used to manage a local or community project to ensure that the budget is established and managed in an efficient way and should be incorporated in the work of the state early childhood office.

Setting Goals and Objectives in the Budget Process

Goals help improve the overall effectiveness of budget planning. Objectives are specific steps that are taken to reach goals. Defining goals and objectives to describe what will be financed is critical. Several states have developed plans that include goals and objectives (and results and outcomes) to create and sustain an early childhood system.⁵¹ States use this information to inform their early childhood budgets.

For example, Washington State's Office of Financial Management implements a management framework that includes the proposed strategies in this guide, described in a slightly different way. The Washington State framework includes the following: plan, allocate, manage, analyze, respond, improve, results. The state has goals that agencies use to develop strategic plans themselves that match the overall state goals. The state agency strategic plan must describe trends in revenue sources, fund balance changes, and identify cost pressures that may affect the financial sustainability of the agency. Agencies are required to use the framework in their day-to-day management and to show results.⁵²

Measuring for Performance Based on Showing Results

There is a public-sector trend to integrate measuring for performance in the budgeting process. The point is to look for efficiencies and measure results based on performance. Budgeting for results and outcomes links strategic planning, financial planning, performance measures, budgeting, and evaluation. This process also helps link fiscal resources to objectives and goals. The focus is on outcomes and not on organizational structure. The Government Finance Officers Association has provided the following recommendations on how to consider budgeting for results and outcomes.

1. **Determine how much money is available:** The budget should be built on expected revenues. This includes base revenues, new revenue sources, and the potential use of fund balance.
2. **Prioritize results:** The results or outcomes that matter most to citizens should be defined. Elected leaders should determine what programs are most important to their constituents.
3. **Allocate resources among high-priority results:** The allocations should be made in a fair and objective manner.
4. **Conduct analysis:** The analysis should help you determine what strategies, programs, and activities will best achieve desired results.
5. **Budget available dollars to the most significant programs and activities:** The objective is to maximize the benefit of the available resources.

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6. **Set measures of annual progress, monitor, and close the feedback loop:** These measures should spell out the expected results and outcomes and how they will be measured.
7. **Check what actually happened:** This involves using performance measures to compare actual versus budgeted results.
8. **Communicate performance results:** Internal and external stakeholders should be informed of the results in an understandable format.⁵³

Several states have used results-based budgeting to measure and show the impact of the program or services funded. Examples follow:

- [Connecticut](#), [Iowa](#), and [North Carolina](#) have requirements for accountability tracking to report on key indicators related to budgets. These states and their contractors must produce reports that articulate results based on their funding.⁵⁴
- Oregon is implementing a 10-year plan to redesign the way it builds its budget and makes investment decisions. This new design is an outcome-based budget that helps make public resources last and aids decisionmakers in prioritizing public investments that align with services. Under this new budgeting system, the state must set clear budget limits, expectations, and criteria. The process works to build transparency and accountability; budgets will be reviewed by independent teams. Program data are analyzed to ensure that public investments are focused and tied to specific outcomes. Putting this new budgeting system in place requires the state to set clear budget limits, expectations, and criteria.⁵⁵

Identifying Resources Needed

Identifying resources is the process of evaluating which funding streams and resources are accessible to support the goals and objectives of the system, project, or initiative. A fiscal analysis study can help find and evaluate the usefulness of current and potential resources.

A fiscal analysis study or map can provide a report on how funding sources and financing strategies could be used or are used to support key goals and objectives. These studies often offer information on what is being spent now and can show the possibility for new sources of funding. A fiscal analysis is a research approach to systematically identify and analyze expenditures. A fiscal analysis or mapping study does the following:

- Identifies gaps in current funding and how resources can be more effectively coordinated, maximized, or secured.
- Develops better-coordinated systems of supports and services, including programs and revenue streams that align with key goals and indicators.
- Discovers new funding sources that could be leveraged to support programs and services and fund new policy initiatives.
- Maximizes funding opportunities through improved coordination and matching and blending of funds.⁵⁶

The key reason a state, agency, or community coalition completes a fiscal map is “not to find huge pots of money that are being missed, but to look at the funding picture overall to see where there are gaps and redundancies.”⁵⁷ A state example follows:

- [Hawaii](#) commissioned a study that summarized how funds align with the state’s framework for an early childhood system; which agencies control key funding sources; and to what extent funding comes from federal, state, or private sources. In addition, the report analyzed how funding sources and financing strategies are and can be used to support Hawaii’s goals for young children.⁵⁸

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Analyzing Data and Making Financial Decisions

Analyzing data within the budget process entails considering how funds are allocated and how revenue is obtained. It also includes considering whether goals and objectives are being met within the funding source for the project, initiative, or system. It is important to have accurate and reliable data to make decisions and determine impacts.

It is also important to communicate financial results once the appropriate financial metrics have been calculated and to articulate the assumptions that were made throughout the financial analysis process. To ensure that the information and data are understood, a combination of text, graphics, and other visuals may be used to support financial results, data analysis, and key information.⁵⁹

Tracking Variance between Actual and Budgeted Amounts

Tracking budgets is important to the success of a program or state initiative. One way to evaluate an initiative's health is to track the difference between the original plan and what is actually happening. This gap is better known as variance, a comparison of the intended or budgeted amount and the actual amount spent. Variance analysis is the practice of comparing actual results to what was planned or expected. Ensuring that variances in the budget and spending are monitored and addressed is imperative.

Without a clear picture of what the initiative will produce, it is difficult to determine how long it will take or how much it will cost. A sound budget management practice is to review the scheduled baseline of the approved budget for a project or initiative, which can then be used as the basis for measuring and reporting budget performance. The cost baseline is the approved time-phased budget that cost performance will be measured against. It is determined by adding the costs for a specific period or phase, which requires assigning costs to project tasks.

Allocating costs to components may be time consuming, but it allows for more detailed and accurate cost-performance reporting.⁶⁰ These practices ensure that budgets are tracked, reviewed, adjusted, and managed to certify that outcomes are achieved. Key steps to establish schedule and cost baselines in the budget process include the following:

1. Develop the schedule by identifying the activities and tasks needed to produce each deliverable
2. Identify resources for each task
3. Estimate how long (in hours or days) it will take to complete each task
4. Estimate the cost of each task using an average hourly or daily rate for each resource, plus any fixed costs associated with the task
5. Determine which tasks are dependent on others and then develop the critical path
6. Develop the cost baseline (a time-phased budget to measure the project's cost performance); to do this, add the estimated costs by task or by time.

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Financial Forecasting

A financial forecast is an estimate of future financial outcomes for an initiative or project. This guide provides basic information on forecasting as well as two examples to assist with forecasting a financial strategy in early childhood system building. Financial forecasting is the practice of projecting the quantitative impact of trends and changes in a working environment on future operations. Therefore, it is an integral part of all ongoing planning efforts. Financial forecasting is important for several reasons:

- Forecasting eases planning efforts by quantifying the future costs and benefits of strategic decisions. Thus, budgetary priorities may be evaluated based on their long-term impacts.
- Forecasting clarifies trends, needs, and issues that must be addressed and evaluated in preparing budgets. For example, enrollment forecasting may reveal growing student populations and focus attention on the need for increased resource allocations for staff, facilities, or both.
- Forecasting enhances decisionmaking at all levels of administration. Forecasts provide valuable insight into future issues, allowing administrators to be proactive. Forecasting creates the framework for anticipatory management.

Although financial forecasting should be a continuing process, it is an important component of budget development. Forecasts of projected enrollments, property tax base and revenues, costs associated with salary adjustments, and the like are important elements in setting baseline budgetary guidelines and creating the basis for assumptions used to prepare budgets. Additionally, forecasting provides fiscal impact analysis that may be integrated into the budget development process. Thus, current budgetary decisions may be evaluated for their long-term results.

To prepare for the forecasting process, several steps should be taken to ensure that reliable and useful data are gathered. The following items need to be considered:

- **Clarify the intended purpose of the forecast:** The prospective audience may require a certain set of data and related assumptions.
- **Match the timeframe with the purpose of the forecast:** Timeframes for forecasts will vary according to the purpose (in other words, type) of forecast being prepared.
- **Ensure the accuracy of basic data:** Original source data should be used rather than extrapolated or summarized versions. Sources should be documented and verified if questions concerning data validity arise.
- **Specify the underlying assumptions:** Assumptions should be explicit in the forecasts, with proper documentation based on actual data.
- **Be consistent in calculations:** Spreadsheet programs are recommended for preparing forecasts to ensure the accuracy and consistency of calculations.
- **Examine data critically:** A scan of the data may reveal anomalies or errors that could negatively affect forecasts. Further, completing a comparison of initial values and forecasted values should help ensure the reasonableness of forecasted values.
- **Recognize that forecasting requires insight and intuition:** Some variables or forecasting assumptions will always be a best guess. However, experience provides a basis for this type of estimation.⁶¹

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Cost Estimation and Modeling

Cost estimation models are mathematical algorithms or parametric equations used to estimate the costs of initiatives. There are tools that can be used for estimating the cost of an initiative, program, or system. For early childhood, tools from the Administration for Children and Families have recently been created to assist with costing out program cost, cost of quality improvement, and professional development systems. States also may explore how the use of these tools may help with setting payment rates and projecting costs, particularly as revisions to the Child Care and Development Fund allow alternative rate-setting strategies. An overview of the tools follows:

- The Provider Cost of Quality Calculator is a new, easy-to-use, dynamic web-based tool that calculates the cost of quality based on site-level provider data. The tool helps state policymakers understand the costs associated with delivering high-quality early care and education. The tool can demonstrate whether there is a gap between the cost of providing quality services and the revenue sources available to support a program. Information on the size of the gap at different quality levels for various types of providers can inform the design of financial support and incentive packages.⁶² Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington have used the calculator to develop a set of dynamic models to estimate the cost of operating early learning programs at various levels of quality consistent with the state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).⁶³
- The Cost Estimation Model is an online tool designed to help state administrators determine costs of implementing all elements of a QRIS and explore scale-up options. The tool can be used to estimate the cost per year of phasing in a QRIS, the cost of certain elements, or the overall cost of a fully implemented QRIS.⁶⁴
- The Professional Development (PD) System Cost Analysis Tool helps states and territories understand current investments and target resources toward PD systems and initiatives that result in a well-qualified early childhood and school-age workforce. The tool can help PD system funders analyze and align investments with states' and territories' priorities and forecast budget needs to advance workforce goals.⁶⁵

The reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Fund allows for new approaches to financing for child care subsidy programs and provides the opportunity to use alternative methods to gather data to determine rates paid for child care. The new language requires market surveys to be valid and reliable. There is more emphasis on ensuring that families have access to higher quality of care and proving how rates are determined, set, and implemented.

One alternative method that states may use to determine rates paid for care is a cost estimation model. Using a cost modeling method would allow states to see the true cost of care, including the cost of items such as professional development, materials, staffing ratios and size of a group, program size, enrollment changes, and employee compensation and benefits. This new costing methodology will help states understand the true cost of care beyond what the market is able to charge for a type of care.⁶⁶

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Resources

Financial Forecasting

[“An Introduction to Financial Forecasting”](#) (Timothy G. Sullivan, 1993)

This chapter in *How to Prepare a Financial Forecast* describes the basics of financial forecasting. It can be used as a learning tool to understand the fundamentals of forecasting and practice.

[Cost Estimation Model](#) (Office of Child Care, n.d.)

This online tool is designed to help state administrators determine costs of implementing all elements of a quality rating and improvement system and explore scale-up options. The tool can be used to estimate the cost per year of phasing in such a system, the cost of certain elements, or the overall cost of a fully implemented system.

[Demonstration of the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator \(2015\)](#) (Office of Child Care, 2015)

The Provider Cost of Quality Calculator is a cost modeling tool that is designed to assist with calculating the costs associated with different aspects of services. The tool helps state policymakers understand the costs associated with delivering high-quality early care and education. The tool can demonstrate whether there is a gap between the cost of providing quality services and the revenue sources available to support a program.

[“Lessons from Cost Modeling: The Link Between ECE Business Management and Program Quality”](#) (Alliance for Early Childhood Finance, 2010)

A policy brief that describes the linkages between program operating costs and program quality and the impacts that this model has on designing systems.

[Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education](#) (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018)

This book shares funding strategies for early care and education and is aimed at practitioners and leaders alike.

[Professional Development System Cost Analysis Tool](#) (Office of Child Care, and Office of Head Start, n.d.)

This tool is designed to help states and territories understand current investments and target resources for professional development systems and initiatives that result in a well-qualified early childhood and school-age workforce. The tool can help professional development system funders analyze and align investments with state or territory priorities and forecast budget needs to advance workforce goals.

[The Cost Estimation Tool for EHS-CC Partnership Services](#) (Office of Child Care, and Office of Head Start, n.d.)

The Cost Estimation Tool for Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships is a cost modeling tool that is designed for Early Head Start grantees and their child care partners to determine the cost of services when participating in a partnership agreement.

Financial Management

[“Financial Management”](#) (Government Finance Officers Association, n.d.)

The Government Finance Officers Association provides resources, training, research, and consultation around financing issues related to managing and administering state finances.

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Maximizing the Impact of Public Funding

[Blending and Braiding Early Childhood Program Funding Streams Toolkit](#) (Margie Wallen, and Angela Hubbard, 2013)

The Ounce of Prevention Fund supported the development of a toolkit that lays out the foundation for blending and braiding funding at the program level. The toolkit provides best practices, resources, and examples.

[Opportunities Exchange](#) (Opportunities Exchange, n.d.)

Opportunities Exchange offers consulting support in finding ways to finance early childhood programs and services. The organization also supports the formation of shared-service alliances. The Opportunities Exchange website provides resources related to these goals.

[Shared Services: A New Business Model to Support Scale and Sustainability in Early Care and Education](#) (Louise Stoney, 2009)

This brief describes aspects of shared services as a new business model to support early care and education systems.

Revenue Generation Strategies

[Alliance for Early Childhood Finance](#) (Alliance for Early Childhood Finance, n.d.)

This website features resources to share knowledge, support innovation, and encourage the field of early care and education to explore ways to restructure, simplify, and expand possibilities for financing early childhood education in the United States. The Alliance was established to address the need for deeper, more comprehensive, and more sophisticated exploration of early childhood education finance.

[Early Childhood Systems: Transforming Early Learning](#) (Lynne Kagan, and Kristie Kauerz, Eds., 2012)

This compendium of articles on governance looks at many issues, including revenue generation.

[Extra Credit: How Louisiana is Improving Child Care](#) (Nancy Duff Campbell, Joan Entmacher, Helen Blake, and Amy K. Matsui, 2015)

The National Women's Law Center describes how Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credits have generated millions of dollars in new investments in child care quality. This report describes five separate credits that make up the package and quantifies resources.

[Making Care Less Taxing: Improving State Child and Dependent Care Tax Provisions](#) (Nancy Duff Campbell, Amy K. Matsui, Julie G. Vogtman, and Anne W. King, 2011)

This report covers the 34 child and dependent care tax provisions in effect in 28 states in tax year 2010. The accompanying state report card, *Making the Grade for Care*, grades those state provisions. Annual update memos are available for tax years 2012, 2013, and 2014.

[Tax Credits for Early Care and Education: Funding Strategy in a New Economy](#) (Opportunities Exchange, 2011)

This issue brief from Opportunities Exchange examines an early childhood education financing strategy that, so far, has not received the attention it deserves—the use of tax credits to raise the quality of services and to make high-quality early childhood education more available to low-income and working-poor families.

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[“The Potential and Limitations of Impact Bonds: Lessons from the First Five Years of Experience Worldwide”](#) (Emily Gustafsson-Wright, Sophie Gardiner, and Vidya Putcha, 2015)

This study from the Brookings Institution offers an overview of impact bonds, including definitions of the concepts, key players, and structuring of impact-bond transactions; a comprehensive inventory of all 38 active social impact bonds (contracted as of March 1, 2015), as well as some of the social and development impact bonds in the development stage; and an inventory of key policy actions and legislation to support the impact-bond ecosystem. The report also includes analysis of the stakeholder motivations, key facilitating factors, and biggest challenges faced in the 38 social impact bond transactions; a critical examination of 10 positive claims made about impact bonds based on 5 years of experience worldwide; and an analysis of the potential of impact bonds and possible derivatives, with a particular focus on developing-country contexts. Impact bonds related to early childhood services are included in this document.

[2016 Expiring Tax Credits](#) (Oregon Legislative Revenue Office, 2015)

This legislative research report on tax credits in Oregon provides good background on the rationale for and actual use of several types of child care credits for both individual and corporate taxpayers (see pp. 40–54)

[Using Tax Credits to Promote High Quality Early Care and Education Services](#) (Louise Stoney, and Anne Mitchell, 2007)

This paper delves into the feasibility of using the market intervention of tax credits—linked to quality and accountability measures like a QRIS—to help promote, and partially finance, higher quality early care and education services. It includes examples of successful tax provisions used in other industries.

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